

Volunteer Fire and Wyoming's 84th Civil Support Team join in training

By Officer Candidate Christian Venhuizen
Public Affairs Specialist
Wyoming National Guard

When there's danger in the rural lands of Wyoming, it's volunteers who ride to the rescue. Most are volunteer firemen, but they can be supplemented by the volunteer Soldiers and Airmen of the Wyoming National Guard's 84th Civil Support Team.

The all-volunteer National Guard team makes up the 84th CST, a full-time unit that can assist first responders when there is a potential weapon of mass destruction. The 84th is developing relationships with those first responders by training with the agencies they will work with.

Lt. Col. Pete Linde is the commander of the 84th. He said training earlier this year in Jackson Hole and a March 5 emergency medical technician training session with the volunteers of Laramie County Fire District No. 8 are experiences his unit can use to assist victims.

"When a weapon of mass destruction incident happens, we already have a relationship with these departments and that will make the difference in ensuring a timely, accurate response," he said.

Fire District No. 8 Capt. Mike Phelps said he agrees the more seamless the service, the better it is for the victims. "People don't care what color truck shows up; they just want help. It's important when we run a call like this and we're working together because we're all working for the same goals."

Phelps said agencies like Fire District No. 8, located just north of Cheyenne, try to train with other first responders, but it's difficult to coordinate schedules when everyone has a separate full-time job. "The hardest part is just finding time," he said.

The 84th Civil Support Team and the Wyoming National Guard have tried to ease the scheduling burden with flexibility. The team is made up of Soldiers and Airmen with expertise and skills covering a wide range of first-responder needs. That means they train as emergency medical technicians and hazardous materials specialists, among other duties, throughout the year.

"We're here to assist Wyoming's fulltime and volunteer emergency responders and that applies to training with them as well as working alongside them," Linde said. "We are National Guardsmen. That means we don't just serve our country, we also serve our community."

The joint training the group accomplished ranged from learning what firefighting equipment is stored in a particular part of the truck to learning how to extract a victim from a severely damaged vehicle.

Volunteer firefighters and CST members pulled dummies and “injured” troops out of mangled cars. Sometimes it was a National Guardsman providing corrective instruction; sometimes it was Phelps making sure the victim did not sustain further “injury” due to mistakes.

SUGGESTED CUTLINE: INSTRUCTION – Laramie County Fire District No. 8 Capt. Mike Phelps, kneeling center, provides constructive criticism to Soldiers and Airmen of the Wyoming National Guard’s 84th Civil Support Team. Fire District No. 8 and the 84th trained together March 5.

SUGGESTED CUTLINE: JOINT EFFORT – Laramie County Fire District No. 8 firefighter Janice Glasson, left, firefighter Brett Kline, center, and Soldiers and Airmen of the Wyoming National Guard’s 84th Civil Support Team work on a “victim” after extricating him from a vehicle. Fire District No. 8 and the 84th trained together March 5.